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DTE TO HOLD STATEWIDE ENERGY ASSISTANCE FORUMS

Auto-Enrollment for Discounted Utility Rates to Aid Most Vulnerable

In response to mounting concern over rising natural gas and electricity prices, the Department of Telecommunications & Energy ("DTE") has scheduled sixteen energy assistance forums throughout the state this month. All Massachusetts gas utility companies, as well as National Grid Electric, will participate in these forums and will have consumer representatives available to provide on-the-spot assistance. NSTAR Electric, Western Massachusetts Electric, and Fitchburg Electric will participate in similar forums in future months.

"Higher energy costs will be difficult for all consumers to manage, especially for our low-income and elderly citizens. Government needs to do everything in its power to help. These forums will explain the reasons for recent cost increases and the steps households need to take to blunt the impact of higher costs," said DTE Chairman Paul G. Afonso.

Utility consumers who attend these forums will also learn about available conservation programs, low-income fuel assistance and budget billing plans to help them reduce their energy use and better manage their costs.

Next month, the DTE will resume automatically enrolling income-qualified households for discounted gas and electric rates. Working with the utilities and the Massachusetts Division of Transitional Assistance, qualifying households will receive discounts on the delivery charge for monthly gas and electric bills. "We anticipate enrolling 24,000 additional households this year which will yield over \$3 million in energy savings over the winter heating season," said DTE Consumer Commissioner Judith Judson.

"more"

The following is the statewide schedule for Energy Assistance Forums in October:

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| October 17, 7:00 p.m., Blackstone Town Hall | Blackstone Gas |
| October 17, 7:00 p.m., North Shore Community College, Lynn | KeySpan |
| October 18, 6:00 p.m., Chelsea Public Library | KeySpan |
| October 18, 7:00 p.m., North Attleboro Police Department | New England Gas |
| October 19, 6:00 p.m., Lowell City Hall | KeySpan |
| October 20, 6:30 p.m., Parlin Memorial Library, Everett | Mass Electric |
| October 20, 7:00 p.m., Barnstable High School, Hyannis | KeySpan |
| October 24, 7:00 p.m., New Bedford Free Public Library | NSTAR |
| October 24, 7:00 p.m., Springfield City Hall | Bay State Gas |
| October 25, 6:00 p.m., Lawrence Main Public Library | Bay State Gas |
| October 25, 7:00 p.m., Worcester City Hall | Mass Electric |
| October 26, 6:00 p.m., Fitchburg Public Library | Fitchburg Gas |
| October 26, 7:00 p.m., Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield | Berkshire Gas |
| October 26, 7:00 p.m., Commonwealth College Center, Fall River | New England Gas |
| October 27, 7:00 p.m., Brockton High School | Bay State Gas |
| October 27, 7:00 p.m., Haverhill City Hall | KeySpan |